

CHAPTER VIII

CHILDREN

BIRTH AND NAMING OF CHILDREN

A woman who has had sexual intercourse with a man is called a *waḥama* during the thirty days while it is as yet unknown whether she has conceived or not. If she has conceived she is called *nāzel* or *hāmel*. For her delivery a Rwala woman never sends for a midwife. Kurdi's wife, for example, bore a child while sitting in a *ḡetab* litter on the march and never ceased to guide her camel. She cut the navel cord herself, wrapped the child in her dress, dismounted in the new camping ground, and carried the baby boy, *ajjel*, to her tent.

A woman who has miscarried, *ramat*, and the fruit of whose womb has perished, *rma'*, is an object of fear.

A woman after confinement, *nefesa*, lives just as before the delivery, with no change in her diet.

When a son is born, the father is congratulated by his nearest relatives but expresses no particular joy; neither does he send out invitations to a meat supper. No animal is sacrificed or slaughtered at the birth of a boy or girl.

For seven days after its birth the child is bathed in camel's urine and rubbed with salt. On either the tenth, twentieth, or fortieth day wheat is gathered by the female relatives of the confined woman, shredded, and then a dinner prepared from it in her tent, to which all the women from the camp are invited. This festivity is known as the examination of the child, *tlā'at al-ajjel*. The mother goes with the child on a visit to all her relatives, a custom called *tatli'a*. Everybody presents the baby with something, often either a young camel or a colt, the gift remaining its property.

Its name the child receives from its mother alone, this being one of her privileges. Sometimes she selects a name without thinking long about it; at other times, again, she may be directed by various influences. Thus, for instance, Prince an-Nūri's wife gave birth to a boy when camping near the castle of Āl Aḡeḡzer — or, as it is called by the Rwala, al-

SPECIAL CONDITIONS OF VENGEANCE

628

672

562

614

602

The wife, daughter, or sister of the culprit is never persecuted by the avenger. If his sister or daughter is married to a man not a member of the culprit's kin, he also will be spared.

Should a woman commit murder, her husband is not subject to vengeance if he is not of her kin. He paid for her what her relatives asked, they have kept the payment and thus become liable for her misdeeds. The responsibility for the moral offenses of a woman is borne by her husband, but her material good or evil is the concern of her kin, *ḥaṭājahā w-aṭāmiha berḳubt ar-raḡol ḥejrah w-šarrha lahalha*. The person whom the married woman can most inconvenience is her own brother; hence the proverb: "The brother of a married woman is far removed from any good done by her, but very close to any evil she may be guilty of; *aḥu sirre ba'id 'an al-ḥejr žerib 'an al-mežarra*." If, therefore, the married woman commits murder, her brother is considered to be her chief accomplice. Her kin will flee, while she will remain calmly with her husband, unless he divorces her. The blood price is paid by her kin out of their own means. If she has received a few she-camels from her husband out of his surplus, *damā'anteḥ*, she cannot use them for paying the blood price without his consent, because he gave her the animals for her own benefit and for the good of the children she has borne him, not for the benefit of her kin.

683

● 843

628

Again, should anyone kill a married woman, it is the duty of her brother to avenge her, but the husband demands compensation. He who strikes a pregnant woman so that she miscarries, *ramat*, before the seventh month of her pregnancy, while it is impossible to recognize whether the unripe fruit of her womb was of the male or female sex, must pay twenty-five she-camels. If she miscarries in her seventh or eighth month or, as they say, hurries on the birth, *ista'jelat*, and the prematurely born child dies, the compensation for a boy amounts to fifty, for a girl to twenty-five she-camels. Should the mother also die, twenty-five she-camels more must be paid. These are taken by the woman's kin, the husband receiving what was paid for the child.

682

628

562

The husband who has paid for his wife in full, may kill her without making himself liable to pay the blood price to